Clayton Mayor.

Martis quarto die Maij 1680. *Annoq; Regis Caroli ſecundi, Angliæ, &c. xxxii.*

THis Court doth earneſtly deſire the Reverend Dr. *Stillingfleet*, Dean of St. *Pauls*, to Print his Sermon Preached at the *Guild-Hall* Chappel on *Sunday* Morning laſt, with what further he had prepared to deliver at that time.

Wagſtaff.

THE Mischief of Separation.

A SERMON

Preached at

GUILD-HALL CHAPPEL,

May 11. MDCLXXX. Being the First *Sunday* in *EASTER*-TERM,

Before the

Lord Mayor, &c.

By *Edw. Stillingfleet*, D. D. Dean of St. *Paul's*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

The Fourth Edition.

LONDON,
Printed for *Henry Mortlock*, at the *Phœnix* in St. *Pauls* Church-yard, and at the *White Hart* in *Westminster* Hall. 1680.

TO THE

Right Honourable

Sr. Robert Clayton

LORD MAYOR of the City

of LONDON.

My Lord,

IN obedience to Your Lordſhips Order I now preſent to Your hands, not only the Sermon You lately heard, but thoſe Additions, which the ſtraits of time would not then permit me to deliver. In all which, I was ſo far from intending to ſtir up the Magiſtrates and Judges to a Perſecution of Diſſenters, as ſome ill men have reported, that my only deſign was

to prevent any occaſion of it, by finding out a certain foundation for a laſting Union *among our ſelves. Which is impoſſible to be attained, till men are convinced of the* Evil *and* Danger *of the preſent* Separation; *it being carried on by ſuch Principles as not only overthrow the preſent* Conſtitution *of our* Church, *but any other whatſoever. For, if it be lawful to ſeparate on a pretence of greater* Purity, *where there is an* Agreement *in* Doctrine, *and the* ſubſtantial Parts *of* Worſhip, *as is acknowledged in our Caſe; there a bare difference of opinion as to ſome circumſtances of Worſhip and the beſt conſtitution of Churches will be ſufficient ground to break Communion and to ſet up new Churches: Which conſidering the great variety of mens fancies about theſe matters, is to make an infinite* Diviſibility *in* Churches, *without any poſſible ſtop to farther* Separation. *But, if after themſelves are pleaſed with condeſcenſions to their own minds, any think it fit that others ſhould be tied up, notwithſtanding their diſſatisfaction; the world will judge it too great partiality in them to think that none ought to* ſeparate *but* themſelves, *and that the ſame* Reaſon *will hold againſt themſelves in the judgement of others; it thereby appearing, that it is not* Uniformity *they diſlike, but that they do not preſcribe the Terms of it.*

But, my Lord, I intend not to argue the Caſe *of* Separation *here, (which is at large done in the following Diſcourſe) but only to ſhew, how neceſſary it was in order to the laying a Foundation for* Peace *and* Unity, *to have this matter throughly diſcuſſed. And if once the*

People

People be brought to underſtand and practiſe their duty as to Communion *with our* Churches, *other Difficulties which obſtruct our* Union *will be more eaſily removed.*

I have endeavoured to purſue my deſign in a way ſuitable to the nature of it, without ſharp and provoking reflections on the Perſons of any; which often ſet Friends at diſtance, but never reconciled or convinced Adverſaries. However, I muſt expect the Cenſures of ſuch who either make our Diviſions, *or make uſe of them for their own ends: but I am contented to be made a* ſacrifice, *if thereby I might* cloſe *up the* Breaches *among us.*

God Almighty *Bleſs this great* City *and Your Lordſhips care in the* Government *of it; and grant that* in this our day, we may yet know the things that belong to our Peace, *and to the Preſervation of the* true Proteſtant Religion *among us.*

I am,

my Lord,

Your Lordſhips moſt faithful

and obedient Servant,

Edward Stillingfleet.

PHIL.

PHIL. III. 16.

Nevertheleſs, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the ſame rule, let us mind the ſame things.

ALthough the *Chriſtian Religion* doth lay the greateſt obligations on mankind to *Peace* and *Unity*, by the ſtricteſt commands, the higheſt examples, and the moſt prevailing arguments; yet ſo much have the paſſions and intereſts of men overſwai'd the ſenſe of their duty, that as nothing ought to be more in our *wiſhes*, ſo nothing ſeems more remote from our *hopes*, than the *univerſal Peace* of the *Chriſtian World*. Not that there is any impoſſibility in the thing, or any conſiderable difficulty, if all men were ſuch Chriſtians as they ought to be; but as long as men purſue their ſeveral factions and deſigns under the colour and pretence of zeal for Religion; if

they did not find Names and Parties ready framed, that were ſuitable to their ends, the difference of their deſigns would make them. So that till mens corruptions are mortified, and their paſſions ſubdued to a greater degree than the world hath yet found them, it is in vain to expect a ſtate of peace and tranquillity in the Church. We need not go far from home for a ſufficient evidence of this; for although our differences are ſuch as the wiſer Proteſtants abroad not only condemn but wonder at them; yet it hath hitherto puzzled the wiſeſt perſons among us to find out ways to compoſe them; not ſo much from the diſtance of mens opinions and practices, as the ſtrength of their prejudices and inclinations. What thoſe *diviſions of Reuben* of old were, which cauſed *ſuch thoughts and ſearchings of heart*, we neither well underſtand, nor doth it much concern us: but the continuance, if not the widening, of theſe unhappy breaches among our ſelves doth give juſt cauſe for many ſad reflections. When neither the miſeries we have felt, not the calamities we fear; neither the terrible judgements of God upon us, nor the unexpected deliverances vouchſafed to us, nor the common danger we are yet in, have abated mens heats, or allayed their paſſions, or made them more willing to unite with our eſtabliſhed Church and Religion. But inſtead of that, ſome rather

Judges 5. 15, 16.

rather ſtand at a greater diſtance if not defiance, and ſeem to entertain themſelves with hopes of new revolutions; others raiſe freſh calumnies and reproaches, as well as revive and ſpread abroad old ones; as though their buſineſs were to make our breaches wider, and to exaſperate mens ſpirits againſt each other; at ſuch a time, when Reaſon and common ſecurity, and above all our Religion obligeth us *to follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edifie another*; and not ſuch as tend to our mutual deſtruction; as moſt certainly our diviſions and animoſities do. Yet all parties pretend to a zeal for Peace, ſo they may have it in their own way: by which it appears that it is not Peace they aim at but Victory; nor Unity ſo much as having their own wills. Thoſe of the *Roman Church* make great boaſts of their Unity and the effectual means they have to preſerve it; but God deliver us from ſuch cruel ways of Peace, and ſuch deſtructive means of Unity as Treachery and Aſſaſſinations, and an Inquiſition. *Their feet are ſwift to ſhed blood; deſtruction and miſery are in their wayes; and the way of Peace they have not known.* But it were happy for us, if all thoſe who agree in renouncing the Errors and Corruptions of the Roman Church, could as eaſily join together in the great duties of our common Religion, that is, in our Prayers, and Praiſes,

Rom. 14. 19.

Rom. 3. 15, 16, 17.

and Sacraments, and all ſolemn acts of Divine Worſhip. For this would not only take off the reproach of our Adverſaries, who continually upbraid us with our Schiſms and Separations, but it would mightily tend to abate mens paſſions, and to remove their prejudices, and to diſpoſe their inclinations, and thereby lay a foundation for a bleſſed Union among our ſelves. Which would fruſtrate the great deſign of our enemies upon us, who expect to ſee that Religion deſtroyed by our own folly, which they could not otherwiſe hope to accompliſh by their utmoſt care and endeavour. And we may juſtly hope for a greater bleſſing of God upon us, when we offer up our joint Prayers and Devotions to him, *lifting up*, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *holy hands without wrath and diſputing*. This is therefore a thing of ſo great conſequence to our Peace and Union, that tends ſo much to the Honour of God, and our common Safety and Preſervation; that no perſon who hath any real concernment for theſe things, can deny it to be not only juſt and fitting, but in our circumſtances neceſſary to de done, if it can be made appear to be lawful, or that they can do it with a good Conſcience.

1 Tim. 2. 8.

And this is the ſubject I deſign to ſpeak to at this time; and for that purpoſe have made choice of theſe words of the Apoſtle, *Nevertheleſs, where-*

to

to we have already attained, let us walk by the ſame rule, let us mind the ſame things.

For our better underſtanding the full ſcope and meaning of the Apoſtle in theſe words, we are to conſider, that an unhappy Schiſm, or wilful breach of the Churches Unity, had begun in the Apoſtles times, upon the difference that aroſe concerning the neceſſity of keeping the Law of *Moſes*. And that which made the *Schiſm* the more dangerous, was, that the firſt beginners of it pretended a Commiſſion from the Apoſtles themſelves at *Jeruſalem*, and were extreamly buſie and induſtrious to gain and keep up a party Act. 15. 24. to themſelves in the moſt flouriſhing Churches planted by the Apoſtles. At *Antioch* they bore ſo great a ſway, that St. *Peter* himſelf complyed with them, *and not only other Jews, but Barnabas* Gal. 2. 12, *alſo was carried away with their diſſimulation.* 13. Inſomuch that had it not been for the courage and reſolution of St. *Paul*, all the Gentile Chriſtians had been either forced to a compliance with the Jews, or to a perpetual Schiſm, (of which St. *Peter* had been in probability the *Head*, and not of the *Churches Unity* if St. *Paul* had not vigorouſly oppoſed ſo dangerous a compliance) But finding ſo good ſucceſs in his endeavours at *Antioch*, he purſues thoſe falſe Apoſtles, who made it their buſineſs to divide and ſeparate the Chriſtians from each others Communion, through all

the

the Churches, where they had, or were like to make any great impreſſion. He writes his *Epiſtle* to the *Galatians* purpoſely againſt them; he warns
Rom. 16. 17. the Chriſtians at *Rome* of them. *Now I beſeech you Brethren mark them which cauſe Diviſions and Offences contrary to the Doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them.* And becauſe he had underſtood they had been buſie at *Philippi* to make a party there too, therefore the Apoſtle to prevent their deſigns, makes uſe of this following method.

1. He exhorts the *Philippians* to an unanimous and conſtant reſolution, in holding faſt to the faith of the Goſpel, in ſpight of all the threats
Phil. 1. 27, 28. and malice of their enemies: *That ye ſtand faſt in one ſpirit, with one mind, ſtriving together for the faith of the Goſpel; and in nothing terrified by your adverſaries.* If once the fears of troubles and perſecutions make men afraid to own and maintain their Religion; it will be an eaſie matter for their enemies firſt to divide, and then to ſubdue them. But their courage and unanimity in a good Cauſe baffles the attempts of the moſt daring Adverſaries, and makes them willing to retreat when they ſee they can neither diſunite them nor make them afraid.

2. He beſeeches them in the moſt vehement and affectionate manner, not to give way to any differences or diviſions among them,
Phil. 2. 1, 2. *If there be therefore any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort*

comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the ſpirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the ſame love; being of one accord, of one mind. As though he had ſaid unto them, I have ſeen the miſerable effects of diviſions in other Churches already; how our Religion hath been reproached, the Goſpel hindred, and the Croſs of Chriſt rendred of little or no effect by reaſon of them; let me therefore intreat you, if you have any regard to the Peace and Welfare of your own ſouls; if you have any ſenſe of your duty you owe to one another as members of the ſame body; if you have any tenderneſs or pity towards me, avoid the firſt tendencies to any breaches among you; entertain no unjuſt ſuſpicions or jealouſies of each other, ſhew all the kindneſs you are able to your fellow members; live as thoſe that are acted by the ſame ſoul (σύμψυχοι) carry on the ſame deſign; and as much as poſſible prevent any differences in opinions amongſt you.

3. He warns them and gives cautions againſt ſome perſons from whom their greateſt danger was, *viz.* ſuch as pretended a mighty zeal for the Law: And very well underſtanding the miſchief of their deſigns under their ſpecious pretences, he beſtows very ſevere characters upon them, verſ. 2. *Beware of Dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the Conciſion.* All which Characters relate

relate to the breaches and diviſions which they made in the Chriſtian Churches; which like *Dogs* they did tear in pieces, and thereby did unſpeakable miſchief, and ſo were *evil workers*; and by the *Conciſion* St. *Chryſoſtom* underſtands ſuch a cutting in pieces as tends to the deſtruction of a thing; and therefore, ſaith he, the Apoſtle called them κατατομὴν, ὅτι ἡ Ἐκκλησίαν ἐπειρῶντο κατατέμνειν· because they endeavoured to cut in pieces, and thereby to deſtroy the Church of God. But leſt they ſhould give out that St. *Paul* ſpoke this out of a particular pique he had taken up againſt the Law of *Moſes*, he declares that as to the ſpiritual intention and deſign of the Law it was accompliſhed in Chriſtians, verſ. 3. *For we are the Circumciſion which worſhip God in the ſpirit, and rejoice in Chriſt Jeſus, and have no confidence in the fleſh.* And for his own part, he had as much reaſon to glory in legal priviledges as any of them all, *verſ.* 4, 5, 6. but the excellency of the Goſpel of Chriſt had ſo prevailed upon his mind, that he now deſpiſed the things he valued before, and made it his whole buſineſs to attain to the glorious reward which this Religion promiſeth. This he purſues from *verſ.* 7, to *verſ.* 15.

4. Having done this, he perſwades all good Chriſtians to do as he did, verſ. 15. *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.* But

becauſe

becauſe many diſputes and differences as to opinion and practice might happen among them, he therefore lays down two Rules for them to govern themſelves by.

1. If any happen'd to differ from the body of Chriſtians they lived with, they ſhould do it with great Modeſty and Humility, not breaking out into factions and diviſions, but waiting for farther information, which they may expect that God will give upon a diligent and ſober uſe of the beſt means; *And if in any thing ye be otherwiſe minded, God ſhall reveal even this unto you.* By leaving them to Gods immediate care for farther illumination, he doth not bid them depend upon extraordinary revelation; but requires them to wait upon God in his own way, without proceeding with the falſe Apoſtles to the ways of Faction and Separation, and in the mean time to go as far as they could.

2. For thoſe who were come to a firmneſs and ſettlement of judgement upon the Chriſtian principles, he charges them by all means to preſerve Unity and Peace among themſelves. *Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the ſame Rule, let us mind the ſame things.*

Wherein the Apoſtle ſuppoſes two things.

I. The neceſſity of one fixed and certain Rule, notwithſtanding the different attainments among Chriſtians. *Nevertheleſs, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the ſame Rule.*

II. The duty and obligation which lies upon the beſt Chriſtians to obſerve it. He doth not ſpeak to the ignorant and unthinking multitude; not *to the licentious rabble*, nor *to the carnal and worldly Church*; which ſome think are only deſirous of Uniformity; but to the very beſt Chriſtians; to thoſe *who had got the ſtart of others* (as the words here ſignifie) that they would be an example of Peace and Unity to their Brethren.

I. *The neceſſity of one fixed and certain* Rule, *notwithſtanding the different attainments of Chriſtians.* Τῷ αὐτῷ στοιχεῖν κανόνι· which Phraſe ſeems to be a continuation of the former alluſion to a Race. For as *Euſtathius* obſerves, the firſt thing the Greeks were wont to do as to their exerciſes, was to circumſcribe the bounds within which they were to be performed. That which fixed and determined theſe limits was called κανὼν by the Greeks, and *Regula* and *Lineæ* by the Latins: thence *tranſilire lineas* in *Cicero* is to commit a fault, to break the bounds within which we are confined.

Χώρον μὲν πρῶτον διεμέτρεον, Iliad. 3.

All the queſtion is, what the Apoſtle means by this *Rule*, whether only a Rule of Charity and mutual forbearance, with a liberty of different practice; or ſuch a *Rule* which limits and determines the manner of practice. It cannot be the former, becauſe that is the caſe, the Apoſtle had ſpoken to juſt before. *If in any thing ye be otherwiſe minded*; therefore

therefore now ſubjoining this with reſpect to thoſe who had gone beyond them, he doth imply ſuch an agreement and uniformity of Practice as doth lie in obſerving the ſame ſtanding Rule. For which we muſt conſider, that they underſtood already what orders and directions he had given them when a Church was firſt formed among them; and therefore when the Apoſtle mentions a Rule without declaring what it was, we have reaſon to believe, it was ſuch a Rule which they very well knew, which he had given to them before. So we find elſewhere the Apoſtle refers to ſuch Rules of Government and Order, which he had given to other Churches, and were already received and practiſed among them. For the *Apoſtles* did not write their Epiſtles for the founding of Churches, but they were already in being; only they took notice of any diſorders among them, and reformed abuſes, and left ſome things to *their own* directions, when they ſhould come among them. *And the reſt will I ſet in order when I come. As the Lord hath called every one, ſo let him walk; and ſo ordain I in all the Churches.* Which ſhews that the Apoſtles did not leave all perſons to act as they judged fit, but did make Rules determining their practice, and obliging them to uniformity therein. For might not men pretend that theſe were not things in themſelves neceſſary, and might be ſcrupled by ſome Perſons, and

1 Cor. 7. 34.
1 Cor. 11. 17.

therefore were not fit to be impoſed upon any? But I do not find that the Apoſtles on this account did forbear giving Rules in ſuch caſes, and to oblige Chriſtians to obſerve them; and that not on the meer Authority of Apoſtles, but as Governours of Churches, whoſe buſineſs it is to take care of the welfare and preſervation of them. There are many things which ſeem very little and inconſiderable in themſelves, whoſe conſequence and tendency is very great: and the wiſdom of Governours lies in preventing the danger of little things, and keeping the zeal of well-meaning perſons within its due bounds. For, thoſe who are engaged below in the Valley, fighting in ſmall parties, and purſuing their advantages, do run into the enemies Camp before they are aware of it, may receive an unexpected check from their Commanders in chief, who from the higher ground eſpie the hazard they are in by their over-forwardneſs, and the arts which their enemies uſe in drawing them into little Companies to fight ſeparately, and the danger they may thereby bring upon the whole Army; and therefore ſend them a peremptory order to give over fighting by themſelves and make good their retreat into the Body of the Army: They wonder, they complain, they think themſelves hardly uſed; but no underſtanding man blames their Generals who regard their ſafety more than they do themſelves,

and

and know the allowing them the Liberty they desire, would endanger the destruction of them all. The Wisdom and Conduct of Governours, is quite another thing from the Zeal and Courage of inferiour Persons; who knowing their own resolution and integrity, think much to be controlled; but those who stand upon higher Ground and see further than they can do, must be allowed a better capacity of judging what makes for the safety of the whole, than they can have: and such things which they look on in themselves, and therefore think them mean and trifling, the other look upon them in their consequence, and the influence they may have upon the publick safety. It were extreamly desirable that all good and useful men should enjoy as much satisfaction as might be, but if it cannot be attained without running great hazards of unsettling all, it is then to be considered, whether the general safety or some mens particular satisfaction be the more desirable. And this is that, which the example of the Apostles themselves gives us reason to consider, for although there were many doubts and scruples in their times about several Rites and Customes, yet the Apostles did give Rules in such cases, and bind Christians to observe them; as we find in that famous decree made upon great deliberation, in a Council of the Apostles at *Jerusalem*; Act. 15.28. wherein they determined those things which they knew

knew were then ſcrupled, and continued ſo to be afterwards, whereever the Judaizing Chriſtians prevailed. But notwithſtanding all their diſſatisfaction, the Apoſtles continued the ſame Rule; and S. *Paul* here requires the moſt forward Chriſtians to mind their Rule, and to preſerve Peace and Unity among themſelves.

But doth not S. Paul *in the* 14*th Chapter of his Epiſtle to the* Romans *lay down quite another Rule*, viz. *only of mutual forbearance in ſuch caſes, where men are unſatisfied in Conſcience*?

I anſwer, that the Apoſtle did act like a prudent Governour, and in ſuch a manner, as he thought, did moſt tend to the propagation of the Goſpel, and the good of particular Churches. In ſome Churches that conſiſted moſt of *Jews*, as the Church of *Rome* at this time did, and where they did not impoſe the neceſſity of keeping the Law on the Gentile Chriſtians (as we do not find they did at *Rome*) the Apoſtle was willing to have the Law buried as decently, and with as little noiſe as might be; and therefore in this caſe, he perſwades both parties to Forbearance and Charity, in avoiding *the judging and cenſuring one another*, ſince *they had an equal regard to the honour of God in what they did.* But in thoſe Churches, where the falſe Apoſtles made uſe of this pretence, of the Levitical Law being ſtill in force, to divide the Churches, and to ſeparate the Commu-

Rom. 14. 3, 6, 10.

nion

nion of Chriſtians; there the Apoſtle bids them beware of them, and their practices; as being of a dangerous and pernicious conſequence. So that the preſerving the peace of the Church, and preventing Separation was the great meaſure, according to which, the Apoſtle gave his directions; and that makes him ſo much inſiſt on this advice to the *Philippians*, that whatever their attainments in Chriſtianity were, they ſhould *walk by the ſame Rule, and mind the ſame things.*

II. We take notice of the Duty and obligation that lies upon the beſt Chriſtians, *to walk by the ſame Rule, to mind the ſame things.*

From whence ariſe two very conſiderable Enquiries.

1. How far the obligation doth extend to comply with an eſtabliſhed Rule, and to preſerve the Peace of the Church we live in?

2. What is to be done, if men cannot come up to that Rule? For the Apoſtle ſpeaks only of ſuch as have attained ſo far; *Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the ſame Rule.*

1. How far the obligation doth extend to comply with an eſtabliſhed Rule, and to preſerve the Peace of the Church we live in? This I think the more neceſſary to be ſpoken to, becauſe I cannot perſwade my ſelf that ſo many ſcrupulous and conſcientious men as are at this day among us, would live ſo many years in a known

a known ſin; *i. e.* in a ſtate of Separation from the Communion of a Church, which in Conſcience they thought themſelves obliged to communicate with. It muſt be certainly ſome great miſtake in their judgements muſt lead them to this; (for I am by no means willing to impute it to paſſion and evil deſigns) and out of the hearty deſire I have, if poſſible, to give ſatisfaction in this matter, I ſhall endeavour to ſearch to the bottom of this dangerous miſtake, to which we owe ſo much of our preſent diſtractions and fears.

But for the better preventing all miſ-underſtanding the deſign of my Diſcourſe, I deſire it may be conſidered

1. That I ſpeak not of the Separation or diſtinct Communion of *whole Churches* from each other; which according to the Scripture, Antiquity and Reaſon, have a juſt Right and Power to Govern and Reform themſelves. By *whole Churches*, I mean, the *Churches* of ſuch *Nations*, which upon the decay of the *Roman Empire*, reſumed their juſt Right of Government to themſelves, and upon their owning Chriſtianity, incorporated into one Chriſtian Society, under the ſame common ties and Rules of Order and Government. Such as the Church of *Macedonia* would have been, if from being a Roman Province it had become a Chriſtian Kingdom, and the Churches of *Theſſalonica*, *Philippi* and the reſt had united together.

And

And ſo the ſeveral Churches of the *Lydian* or *Proconſular Aſia*, if they had been united in one Kingdom, and Governed by the ſame Authority, under the ſame Rules, might have been truly called the *Lydian Church*. Juſt as ſeveral Families uniting make one Kingdom, which at firſt had a diſtinct and independent Power, but it would make ſtrange confuſion in the world to reduce Kingdoms back again to Families, becauſe at firſt they were made up of them. Thus National Churches are National Societies of Chriſtians, under the ſame Laws of Government and rules of Worſhip. For the true notion of a *Church* is no more than of a Society of men united together for their Order and Government according to the Rules of the Chriſtian Religion. And it is a great miſtake, to make the notion of a *Church* barely to relate to *Acts* of *Worſhip*; and conſequently that the adequate notion of a Church, is *an Aſſembly for Divine Worſhip*; by which means they appropriate the name of Churches to particular Congregations. Whereas, if this held true, the Church muſt be diſſolved aſſoon as the *Congregation* is broken up; but if they retain the nature of a Church, when they do not meet together for Worſhip, then there is ſome other bond that unites them; and whatever that is, it conſtitutes the Church. And if there be one Catholick Church conſiſting of multitudes of particular Churches

conſenting in one Faith; then why may there not be one National Church from the conſent in the ſame Articles of Religion, and the ſame Rules of Government and Order of Worſhip? Nay, If it be mutual conſent and agreement which makes a Church, then why may not National Societies agreeing together in the ſame Faith, and under the ſame Government and Diſcipline, be as truly and properly a Church, as any particular Congregation? For, is not the *Kingdom* of *France* as truly a Kingdom conſiſting of ſo many Provinces; as the Kingdom of *Ivetot* once was in *Normandy*, which conſiſted of a very ſmall territory? Among the *Athenians*, from whom the uſe of the word Ἐκκλησία came into the Chriſtian Church, it was taken for ſuch an *Aſſembly*, which had the *Power* of *Governing* and determining matters of Religion as well as the affairs of *State*. For the Senate of 500 being diſtributed into fifties according to the number of the Tribes, which ſucceeded by courſe through the year; and was then called πρυτανεύσασα φύλη; every one of theſe had 4 νόμιμοι ἐκκλησίαι *Regular Aſſemblies*: in the laſt of which, an account of the *Sacrifices* was taken and of other matters which concerned Religion; as in the *Comitia Calata* at *Rome*. From whence we may obſerve, that it was not the meeting of one of the ſingle Tribes, was called Ἐκκλησία, but the General Meeting of the Magiſtrates

Rob. Cœnalis Hiſt. Gallic. l. 2. p. 126.

Jul. Pollux Onomaſt. l. 8. c. 9. Schol. in Ariſt. Acharn. Act. 1. ſ. 1.

ſtrates of the whole City and the People together. And in this ſenſe I ſhall ſhew afterwards, the word was uſed in the firſt Ages of the Chriſtian Church, as it comprehended the Eccleſiaſtical Governours and the People of whole Cities; and why many of theſe Cities being united under one Civil Government, and the ſame Rules of Religion ſhould not be called one National Church, I cannot underſtand. Which makes me wonder at thoſe who ſay *they cannot tell what we mean by the Church of England*; in ſhort we mean, that Society of Chriſtian People which in this Nation are united under the ſame Profeſſion of Faith, the ſame Laws of Government, and rules of Divine Worſhip. And every Church thus conſtituted, we do aſſert to have a juſt Right of Governing it ſelf, and of reforming Errors in Doctrine and Corruptions in Worſhip.

Sacrilegious deſertion, p. 35. *Separation yet no Schiſm*, p. 59.

On which Ground, we are acquitted from the imputation of Schiſm in the ſeparation from the Roman Church, for we only reſume our juſt Rights, as the Britiſh Nation did, as to Civil Government, upon the Ruine of the Roman Empire.

2. I do not intend to ſpeak of the Terms upon which Perſons are to be admitted among us to the Exerciſe of the *Function* of the *Miniſtry*; but of the Terms of *Lay-communion*, *i. e.* thoſe which are neceſſary for all Perſons to joyn in our Prayers and

Sacraments and other Offices of Divine Worſhip. I will not ſay, there hath been a great deal of Art uſed to confound theſe two, (and it is eaſie to diſcern to what purpoſe it is;) but I dare ſay, the Peoples not underſtanding the difference of theſe two Caſes hath been a great occaſion of the preſent Separation. For in the Judgement of ſome of the moſt impartial men of the Diſſenters at this day, although they think the caſe of the *Miniſters* very hard on the account of *Subſcriptions* and *Declarations* required of them; yet they confeſs very little is to be ſaid on the behalf of the People, from whom none of thoſe things are required. So that the People are condemned in their Separation, by their own Teachers; but how they can preach lawfully to a People who commit a fault in hearing them, I do not underſtand.

3. I do not confound bare *ſuſpending Communion in ſome particular Rites*, which perſons do modeſtly ſcruple, and uſing it in what they judge to be lawful; with either *total*, or at leaſt *ordinary forbearance of Communion in what they judge to be lawful*; *and proceeding to the forming of Separate Congregations*, *i.e.* under other Teachers, and by other Rules than what the eſtabliſhed Religion allows. And this is the preſent caſe of *Separation* which I intend to conſider, and to make the *ſinfulneſs* and *miſchief* of it appear.

But

But that I may do it more convincingly, I will not make the difference wider than it is; but lay down impartially the *ſtate* of the preſent Controverſie between us and our *diſſenting Brethren*, about *Communion* with our Churches.

1. They unanimouſly confeſs they find no fault with *the Doctrine of our Church*, and can freely ſubſcribe to all *the Doctrinal Articles*; nay they profeſs *greater zeal for many of them, than*, ſay they, *ſome of our own Preachers do*. Well then! The caſe is vaſtly different as to their ſeparation from us, and our ſeparation from the Church of *Rome*; for we declare, if there were nothing elſe amiſs among them, their Doctrines are ſuch, as we can never give our aſſent to.

Peace-offering in the name of the Congregational party, *A.D.* 1667. *p.* 10, 11. *Baxters* Defence of his Cure, *p.* 64. Separation yet no Schiſm, *p.* 60. *Diſcourſe concerning Evangelical Love, Church-Peace and Unity, 1672. *p.* 84, 85, 86. See *Corbet* of Schiſm, *p.* 41. *Baxters* Defence of his Cure, *p.* 38.

2.* They generally yield, that *our Parochial Churches* are *true Churches*; and it is with theſe their Communion is required. They do not deny that we have all the eſſentials of true Churches, *true Doctrine*, *true Sacraments*, and an *implicite Covenant between Paſtors and People*. And ſome of the moſt eminent of the Congregational way have declared; *that they look upon it as an unjuſt calumny caſt upon them, that they look on our Churches as no true Churches.*

3. Many of them declare, *that they hold communion with our Churches to be lawful.* Yea we are told in Print, by one then preſent, *that A. D.* 1663. *divers of their Preachers in* London *met to conſider, how far it was lawful, or their duty to communicate with*

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the Pariſh-Churches where they lived, in the Liturgy and Sacraments; and that the Relator *brought in twenty Reaſons to prove that it is a duty to ſome to join with ſome Pariſh-Churches three times a year in the Lords Supper*; after he had not only proved it *lawful to uſe a form of Prayer, and to join in the uſe of our Liturgy, but in the participation of the Sacrament with us; and no one of the Brethren*, he adds, *ſeemed to diſſent, but to take the Reaſons to be valid. Such another meeting*, we are told, *they had after the Plague and Fire, at which they agreed that Communion with our Churches was in it ſelf lawful and good.* Who could have imagined otherwiſe, than that after the weight of *ſo many Reaſons*, and ſuch a general conſent among them, they ſhould have all joyned with us in what themſelves judged to be lawful, and in many caſes a duty? But inſtead of this, we have rather ſince that time found them more inclinable to courſes of ſeparation, filling the people with greater prejudices againſt our Communion, and gathering them into fixed and ſeparate Congregations; which have proceeded to the choice of new Paſtors upon the death of old ones; and except ſome very few, ſcarce any, either of their Preachers or People here, come ordinarily to the publick Congregations. And this is that which at preſent we lament as a thing which unavoidably tends to our common ruine, if not in time prevented;

Plea for Peace, p. 240.

vented; for by this means the hearts of the People are alienated from each other, who apprehend the differences to be much greater than their Teachers will allow, when they are put to declare their minds; and our common enemies take as much advantage from our differences, as if they were really far greater than they are.

But you may ask, what then are the grounds of the preſent Separation? for that there is ſuch a thing is diſcernible by all, but what the reaſons of it are is hard to underſtand after theſe conceſſions; yet it is not conceiveable that conſcientious men can in ſuch a juncture of affairs perſiſt in ſo obſtinate and deſtructive a courſe of ſeparation, unleſs they had ſomething at laſt fit to anſwer the *twenty Reaſons* of their own Brethren againſt it?

I have endeavoured to give my ſelf ſatisfaction in a matter of ſo great moment to the Peace and Preſervation of this Church, and conſequently of the Proteſtant Religion among us; which I never expect to ſee ſurvive the deſtruction of the Church of *England*.

And the utmoſt I can find in the beſt Writers of the ſeveral Parties, amounts to theſe two things.

1. *That although they are in a ſtate of ſeparation from our Church, yet this ſeparation is no ſin.*

2. That

2. *That a State of Separation would be a sin, but notwithstanding their meeting in different places, yet they are not in a state of Separation.*

And herein lies the whole strength of the several *Pleas* at this day made use of to justifie the *Separate Congregations*: both which I shall now examine.

1. Some plead, *that it is true they have distinct and separate Communions from us, but it is no sin, or culpable separation so to have. For*, say they, *Our Lord Christ instituted only Congregational Churches, or particular Assemblies for Divine Worship, which having the sole Church power in themselves, they are under no obligation of Communion with other Churches, but only to preserve Peace and Charity with them.* And to this doctrine, others of late approach so near, that they tell us, *that to devise new species of Churches (beyond Parochial or Congregational) without Gods Authority, and to impose them on the world (yea in his name) and call all Dissenters Schismaticks, is a far worse usurpation, than to make or impose new Ceremonies or Liturgies.* Which must suppose Congregational Churches to be so much the Institution of Christ, that any other Constitution above these is both unlawful and insupportable. Which is more than the Independent Brethren themselves do assert.

Discourse concerning Evangelical Love, Church-Peace and Unity, *p.* 68.

Baxters true and only way of Concord, *A.D.* 1680. *p.* 111.

But to clear the practice of *Separation* from being a sin on this account, two things are necessary to be done.

1. To

1. To prove that a Christian hath no obligation to external Communion beyond a Congregational Church.

2. That it is lawful to break off Communion with other Churches, to set up a particular independent Church.

1. *That a Christian hath no obligation to external Communion beyond a particular Congregational Church.* They do not deny, *that men by Baptism are admitted into the Catholick visible Church as Members of it; and that there ought to be a sort of Communion by mutual Love among all that belong to this Body:* and to do them Right, they declare *that they look upon the Church of* England, *or the Generality of the Nation professing Christianity, to be as sound and healthful a part of the Catholick Church, as any in the World.* But then they say, *Communion in ordinances must be only in such Churches as Christ himself instituted by unalterable Rules, which were only particular and Congregational Churches.*

Evangelical Love, &c. p. 49. 52. p. 54. p. 59.

Granting this to be true, how doth it hence appear not to be a sin to separate from our Parochial Churches; which according to their own concessions have all the Essentials of true Churches? And what Ground can they have to separate and divide those Churches, which for all that we can see, are of the same nature with the Churches *planted* by the Apostles at *Corinth*, *Philippi* or *Thessalonica*? But I must needs say further, I have never yet seen any tolerable proof, that the Churches

planted by the Apoſtles were limited to Congregations. It is poſſible, at firſt, there might be no more Chriſtians in one City than could meet in one Aſſembly for Worſhip; but where doth it appear, that when they multiplied into *more Congregations*, they did make *new* and *diſtinct Churches*, under new Officers with a *Separate Power* of *Government*? Of this, I am well-aſſured, there is no mark or footſtep in the New Teſtament, or the whole Hiſtory of the Primitive Church. I do not think it will appear credible to any conſiderate man, that the 5000 Chriſtians in the Church of *Jeruſalem* made *one ſtated and fixed Congregation for divine Worſhip*; not if we make all the allowances for *ſtrangers* which can be deſired: but if this were granted, where are the unalterable Rules that aſſoon as the company became too great for one *particular Aſſembly*, they muſt become a new Church under peculiar Officers and an independent Authority?

It is very ſtrange, that thoſe who contend ſo much for the Scriptures being a perfect Rule of all things pertaining to Worſhip and Diſcipline, ſhould be able to produce nothing in ſo neceſſary a Point. If that of which we read the cleareſt inſtances in Scripture, muſt be the ſtandard of all future Ages, much more might be ſaid for limiting Churches to *private families*, than to *particular Congregations*. For, do we not read of

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the Church that was in the House of Priscilla *and* Aquila *at* Rome; of the *Church that was in the House of* Nymphas *at* Colosse; and in *the House of* Philemon *at* Laodicea? Why then should not Churches be reduced to particular *Families*, when by that means they may fully enjoy the Liberty of their Consciences, and avoid the scandal of breaking the Laws? But if, notwithstanding such plain examples, men will extend *Churches* to *Congregations of many Families*; why may not others extend *Churches* to those Societies which consist of *many Congregations*? Especially considering, that the Apostles when they instituted Churches, did appoint such Officers in them, as had not barely a respect to those already converted, but to as many as by their means should be added to the Church; as *Clemens* affirms in his Epistle; *The Apostles*, saith he, *went about in Cities and Countries preaching the Gospel; and appointed their First-fruits, having made a spiritual trial of them, for Bishops and Deacons,* πρὸ μελλόντων πιστεύειν, *of those who were to believe.* From hence the number of Converts were looked on as an accession to the Original Church, and were under the care and Government of the Bishop and Presbyters, who were first settled there. For although when the Churches increased, the occasional meetings were frequent in several places; yet still there was but *one Church*, and *one Altar*, and *one Baptistry*, and *one Bishop*, with many *Presbyters* assisting

Rom. 16. 3. 5. Colos. 4. 15. Philem. v. 2.

Clem. Ep. ad Corinth. p. 55.

him. And this is so very plain in Antiquity, as to the Churches planted by the Apostles themselves in several parts, that none but a great stranger to the History of the Church can ever call it in question. I am sure *Calvin*, a person of great and deserved reputation among our Brethren, looks upon this as a matter out of dispute among learned men, that a Church did not only take in the Christians of a whole City, but of the adjacent Country too: and the contrary opinion is a very novel and late fancy of some among us, and hath not age enough to plead a Prescription. It is true, after some time in the greater Cities, they had distinct places allotted, and Presbyters fixed among them; and such allotments were called *Titles* at *Rome*, and *Lauræ* at *Alexandria*, and *Parishes* in other places; but these were never thought then to be new Churches, or to have any independent Government in themselves; but were all in subjection to the Bishop and his College of Presbyters, of which multitudes of examples might be brought from most authentick Testimonies of Antiquity; if a thing so evident needed any proof at all. And yet this distribution even in Cities was so uncommon in those elder times, that *Epiphanius* takes notice of it as an extraordinary thing at *Alexandria*; and therefore it is probably supposed there was no such thing in all

Unicuique civitati erat attributa certa regio, quæ Presbyteros inde sumeret, & velut corpori Ecclesia illius accenseretur, Calvin. Instit. l. 4. c. 4. n. 2.

all the Cities of *Cyprus* in his time. And if we look over the ancient Canons of the Church, we ſhall find two things very plain in them; (1.) That the notion of a Church was the ſame with that of a Dioceſe; or ſuch a number of Chriſtians as were under the inſpection of a Biſhop. (2.) That thoſe Presbyters who rejected the Authority of their Biſhop, or affected *ſeparate meetings*, where no fault could be found with the Doctrine of a Church, were condemned of Schiſm. So the followers of *Euſtathius Sebaſtenus*, who withdrew from the publick Congregations on pretence of greater ſanctity and purity, in *Paphlagonia*, were condemned by the Council at *Gangræ*; ſo were thoſe who ſeparated from their Biſhops, though otherwiſe never ſo orthodox, by the Council at *Conſtantinople*, and the Council at *Carthage*; wherein before S. *Cyprian* had ſo juſtly complained of the Schiſm of *Feliciſſimus* and his Brethren, who on pretence of ſome diſorders in the Church of *Carthage* had withdrawn to the Mountains; and there laid the Foundation of the *Novatian* Schiſm. But when falſe Doctrine was impoſed on Churches, as by the *Arian* Biſhops at *Antioch*, then the people were excuſed in their ſeparation; ſo at *Rome* when *Felix* was made Biſhop; and at *Sirmium* when *Photinus* publiſhed his Hereſie; but I do not remember one inſtance in Antiquity, wherein *ſeparation* from *Orthodox Biſhops* and ſetting

Petav. not. in Epiphan. hær. 69. n. 1.

Canon. Nican. 6. 15, 16.

Conſtan. c. 6.

Chalced. 17. 20, 26.

Antioc. c. 2.

Codex Eccl. Afric. c. 53. c. 55.

Concil. Gangr. c. 6.

Concil. Conſt. c. 6.

Concil. Carthag. c. 10, 11.

Cyprian. Ep. 40, 42.

Theod. Eccl. hiſt. l. 1. c. 22. l. 2. c. 24. c. 17.

Vincent. c. 16.

ſetting up *Meetings* without their Authority and againſt their conſent, was acquitted from the ſin of *Schiſm.* Indeed ſome Biſhops have ſometimes refuſed Communion with others upon great miſdemeanors; as *Theognoſtus* and S. *Martin* with the *Ithacian* party on the account of the death of *Priſcillian*; but this doth not at all reach to the caſe of Presbyters ſeparating from Biſhops, with whom they agree in the ſame Faith. The followers of S. *Chryſoſtom*, did, I confeſs, continue their ſeparate Meetings after his baniſhment, and the coming in of *Arſacius*: but although they withdrew in his time, being unſatisfied in the manner of his choice; yet when *Atticus* reſtored the name of S. *Chryſoſtom* to the *Diptychs* of the *Church*, they returned to communion with their Biſhop, as S. *Chryſoſtom* himſelf adviſed them (as appears by *Palladius*) which is far from juſtifying the wiful ſeparation of *Presbyters* and *People* from the *Communion* of their *Biſhops*, when they do agree in the *ſame Faith.*

Baron. A. D. 404. *n.* 41. 412. *n.* 47.

2. But ſuppoſe the firſt Churches were barely *congregational*, by reaſon of the ſmall number of Believers at that time, yet *what obligation lies upon us to diſturb the Peace of the Church we live in to reduce Churches to their infant-ſtate?* They do not think it neceſſary to reduce the firſt *Community of Goods*, which was far more certainly practiſed, than Congregational Churches;

Churches; they do not think it neceſſary *to waſh one* Joh. 13.14.
anothers feet, although Chriſt did it, and bad his Diſciples *do as he did*: they believe that the firſt civil Government was appointed by God himſelf over Families; do they therefore think themſelves bound to overthrow Kingdoms to bring things back to their firſt inſtitution? If not, why ſhall the Peace of the Church be in ſo much worſe a condition than that of the Civil-ſtate? It is very uncertain whether the Primitive form were ſuch as they fancy; if it were, it is more uncertain whether it were not rather ſo from the circumſtances of the times, than from any inſtitution of Chriſt; but it is moſt certainly our duty to preſerve Peace and Unity among Chriſtians; and it is impoſſible ſo to do if men break all Orders in pieces for the fancy they have taken up of a Primitive Platform. It is a great fault among ſome who pretend to great niceneſs in ſome *poſitive Duties*, that they have ſo little regard to *comparative Duties*: For that which may be a duty in one caſe, when it comes to thwart a greater Duty, may be uone. This Doctrine we learn from our bleſſed Saviour in the caſe of the obligation of the Mat. 12. 7.
Sabbath; which he makes to yield to duties of Mercy. And can we think that a Duty lying upon us, which in our circumſtances makes a far greater Duty impracticable? Is there any thing Chriſt and his Apoſtles have charged more upon

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the Conſciences of all Chriſtians, than ſtudying
Rom. 14. 19. to preſerve Peace and Unity among Chriſtians?
1 Theſſ. 4. 11. This is that *we muſt follow after*, even when it ſeems to fly from us; this is that, *we muſt apply our*
Phil. 3. 15. 2. 3. *minds to, and think it our honour to promote*; this is that which *the moſt perfect Chriſtians are the moſt zealous*
Eph. 4. 2, 3. *for*; this is that, for the ſake of which we are commanded to practiſe *meekneſs, humility, patience,*
Heb. 13. 17. *ſelf-denial and ſubmiſſion to Governours.* And after all this, can we imagine the attaining of ſuch an end ſhould depend upon mens conjectures, whether five thouſand Chriſtians in times of perſecution could make one Aſſembly for Worſhip? Or whether all the Chriſtians in *Epheſus* or *Corinth* made but one Congregation? On what terms can we ever hope for Peace in the Church, if ſuch Notions as theſe be ground enough to diſturb it? What ſtop can be put to Schiſms and Separations, if ſuch pretences as theſe be ſufficient to juſtifie them? Men may pleaſe themſelves in talking of preſerving *Peace and Love* under ſeparate Communions; but our own ſad experience ſhews the contrary; for as nothing tends more to unite mens hearts than joyning together in the ſame Prayers and Sacraments; ſo nothing doth more alienate mens affections, than withdrawing from each other into ſeparate Congregations. Which tempts ſome to ſpiritual Pride and ſcorn and contempt of others, as of a more *carnal* and *worldly Church* than them-

themſelves; and provokes others to lay open the follies, and indiſcretions and immoralities of thoſe who pretend to ſo much Purity and Spirituality above their Brethren.

2. Others confeſs, *that to live in a ſtate of ſeparation from ſuch Churches, as many at leaſt of ours are, were a ſin;* for they ſay, *that cauſeleſs renouncing Communion with true Churches is Schiſm, eſpecially if it be joyned with ſetting up Anti-Churches unwarrantably againſt them;* but this they deny that they do, although they Preach when and where it is forbidden by Law; and worſhip God, and adminiſter Sacraments by other Rules and after a different manner than what our Church requires. This is not dealing with us with that fairneſs and ingenuity which our former Brethren uſed; for they avow the fact of *ſeparation*, but deny it to be ſinful; theſe owning it to be ſinful, have no other refuge left but to deny the fact, which is evident to all Perſons. For do they not do the very ſame things and in the ſame manner, that the others do; how comes it then to be *ſeparation* in ſome and not in others? They are very unwilling to confeſs a *ſeparation*, becauſe they have formerly condemned it with great ſeverity; and yet they do the ſame things for which they charged others as guilty of a *ſinful ſeparation*. True way of Concord, part 3. ch. 1. Sect. 40.

For, the *Aſſembly* of *Divines* urged their *diſſenting Brethren* to comply with their *Rules* of *Church-Government*,

vernment, and charged them with *Schiſm* if they did it not; whereas they only deſired to enjoy ſuch liberty as to their *ſeparate Congregations*, as is now pleaded for by our *diſſenting Brethren*. *This*, ſay they, *would give countenance to a perpetual Schiſm and Diviſion in the Church, ſtill drawing away ſome from the Churches under the Rule, which alſo would breed irritations between the Parties; and would introduce all manner of Confuſion.* And they thought it a very unreaſonable thing for them to deſire *diſtinct and ſeparated Congregations, as to thoſe parts of worſhip where they could joyn in Communion with them*: and they thought no Perſon was to be indulged *as to any Error or Scruple of Conſcience*; but with this Proviſo, *that in all other parts of worſhip they joyn with the Congregation wherein they live*; and be under the Government to be eſtabliſhed. To this the diſſenting Brethren anſwered, *that ſuch a variation, or forbearance could neither be a Schiſm, nor endanger it; and that the great cauſe of Schiſm hath been a ſtrict obligation of all to Uniformity; that as long as in their ſeparate Congregations they did practiſe moſt of the ſame things, and the moſt ſubſtantial in their Rule, it could not be called a total ſeparation, eſpecially conſidering, that they profeſſed their Churches to be true Churches; and that they had occaſional Communion with them*, which is the very ſame Plea made uſe of at this day among us. To which the Aſſemblies party ſmartly replied, *that ſince they acknowledged their*

Papers for Accommodation, printed 1648. p. 16. p. 20, 21.

P. 22.

P. 25.

P. 28, 29, 30.

Churches

Churches to be ſo true, that they could occaſionally join in all Acts of worſhip, they conceived they were bound to act with them in joint Communion by one Common Rule, and not by different Rules and in ſeparated Congregations. And they add, *that to leave all ordinary Communion in any Church with diſlike, when oppoſition or offence offers it ſelf, is to ſeparate from ſuch a Church in the Scripture ſenſe; ſuch ſeparation was not in being in the Apoſtles times, unleſs it were uſed by falſe Teachers; all who profeſſed Chriſtianity held Communion together, as in one Church, notwithſtanding differences of Judgement, or corruptions in Practice;* and that, *if they can hold occaſional Communion without ſin, they know no reaſon why it may not be ordinary without ſin too, and then ſeparation would be needleſs.* To which they ſubjoin theſe remarkable words, which I heartily wiſh our Brethren at this day would think ſeriouſly upon, *To ſeparate from thoſe Churches ordinarily and viſibly with whom occaſionally you may join without ſin, ſeemeth to be a moſt unjuſt ſeparation.* So that whatever falſe colours and pretences ſome men make uſe of to juſtifie their preſent practice, if the judgement of their own Brethren may be taken upon the moſt weighty debate, and moſt ſerious deliberation, it is no better than plain and downright *ſeparation.* And I muſt needs ſay, I never ſaw any Cauſe more weakly defended, no, not that of *Polygamy* and *Anabaptiſm*, than that of *thoſe*, who allow it to be lawful to join in Com-

P. 47. P. 55. P. 56.

munion with us, and yet go about to vindicate the *ſeparate Meetings* among us, from the guilt of a *ſinful ſeparation*. For although they allow *our Churches to be true*, and *that it is lawful to communicate with them*, which is the moſt plauſible Plea they have, this is ſo far from extenuating, that it doth aggravate the fault; for as the Brethren of the Aſſembly ſaid, *Though they do not pronounce an affirmative Judgement againſt us; yet the very ſeparating is a tacit and practical condemning of our Churches, if not as falſe, yet as impure.* P. 71.

But whatever may be ſaid as to other Pleas for their preſent practices, my Text ſeems to afford the ſtrongeſt of all, *viz.* that men are to be preſſed to go no further than *they have already attained*, and not to be ſtrained up to an *uniformity* beyond the dictates of their Conſciences, but to be let alone, as the Apoſtle directs in the foregoing verſe, *If any one be otherwiſe minded, he muſt be left to God*, and that manifeſtation of his will, which he will be pleaſed to give him.

The clearing of this will give a full anſwer to the ſecond enquiry, *viz.*

2. *What is to be done, if men cannot come up to the Rule preſcribed.*

To this therefore I anſwer in theſe particulars.

1. *This can never juſtifie men in not doing what they lawfully may do.* For this Rule of the Apoſtle makes Communion neceſſary, as far as it is lawful;

ful; and that upon the account of the general obligation lying upon all Chriſtians to do what in them lies for preſervation of the Peace of the Church. *Therefore as far as ye have attained walk by the ſame Rule, do the ſame things*; which words, ſaith *Cajetan*, the Apoſtle ſubjoins to the former, leſt the perſons he there ſpeaks to ſhould think themſelves excuſed from going as far as they can as to the ſame Rule. Which plainly ſhews that men are bound in Conſcience to go as far as they can; and I cannot ſee how it is conſiſtent with that *tenderneſs of Conſcience* which our Brethren pretend to, for ſo many of them to live ſo many years in a neglect of that Communion with our Church, which themſelves judge to be lawful.

I dare ſay, if moſt of the Preachers at this day in the *ſeparate Meetings* were ſoberly asked their judgements, whether it were lawful for the People to joyn with us in the publick Aſſemblies, they would not deny it; and yet the People that frequent them, generally judge otherwiſe. For it is not to be ſuppoſed, that faction among them ſhould ſo commonly prevail beyond intereſt; and therefore if they thought it were lawful for them to comply with the Laws, they would do it. But why then is this kept up as ſuch a mighty ſecret in the breaſts of their Teachers? Why do they not preach it to them in their Congre-

gations?

gations? Is it for fear, they ſhould have none left to preach to? that is not to be imagined of mortified and conſcientious men. Is it leſt they ſhould ſeem to condemn themſelves, while they preach againſt *Separation* in a *Separate Congregation*?

This, I confeſs, looks oddly, and the tenderneſs of a mans mind in ſuch a caſe, may out of meer ſhamefacedneſs keep him from declaring a Truth which flies in his face, while he ſpeaks it.

Is it that they fear the reproaches of the People? which ſome few of the moſt eminent perſons among them, have found they muſt undergo if they touch upon this Subject (for I know not how it comes to paſs, that the moſt *Godly People* among them, can the leaſt endure to be told of their faults.) But is it not as plainly written
Gal. 1. 10. by S. *Paul*, *If I yet pleaſe men I ſhould not be the Servant of Chriſt*; as *Woe be unto me if I preach not the Goſpel*? If they therefore would acquit themſelves like honeſt and conſcientious men, let them tell the people plainly that they look on *our Churches as true Churches, and that they may lawfully communicate with us in Prayers and Sacraments*; and I do not queſtion but in time, if they find it lawful, they will judge it to be their Duty. For it is the Apoſtles Command here, *Whereto we have already attained let us walk by the ſame Rule, let us mind the ſame things.*

2. *If the bare diſſatisfaction of mens Conſciences do juſtifie the lawfulneſs of Separation, and breaking an eſtabliſhed*

eſtabliſhed Rule, it were to little purpoſe to make any Rule at all. Becauſe it is impoſſible to make any, which Ignorant and injudicious men ſhall not apprehend to be in ſome thing or other againſt the dictates of their *Conſciences*. But becauſe what we ſay may not weigh ſo much with them in this matter, as what was ſaid on this Occaſion by their own *Brethren* in the *Aſſembly*, I ſhall give an account of their *Judgement* in this matter.

The *diſſenting Brethren* were not ſo much wanting to their *Cauſe*, as not to plead *tenderneſs* of *Conſcience* with as much advantage and earneſtneſs as any men now can do it. To which they anſwer,

1. That though tenderneſs of Conſcience may juſtifie non-communion in the thing ſcrupled, yet it can never juſtifie Separation. Papers for Accommodation, p. 51. V. p. 61.

We much doubt, ſay they, *whether ſuch tenderneſs of Conſcience, as ariſeth out of an opinion*, cui poteſt ſubeſſe falſum, (*which may be falſe*) *when the Conſcience is ſo tender, that it may be withal an erring Conſcience, can be a ſufficient ground to juſtifie ſuch a material Separation, as our Brethren plead for; For though it may bind, to forbear or ſuſpend the Act of Communion in that particular wherein men conceive they cannot hold Communion without ſin (nothing being to be done contrary unto Conſcience) yet it doth not bind to follow ſuch a poſitive preſcript as poſſibly may be divers from the Will and Counſel of God, of which kind we conceive this of gathering*

Separa-

p. 66. *Separated Churches out of other true Churches to be one.*

2. That it is endleſs to hope to give ſatisfaction to erring Conſciences. *The Grounds*, ſay they, *upon which this Separation is deſired, are ſuch upon which all other poſſible ſcruples which erring conſciences may in any other caſes be ſubject unto, may claim the priviledge of a like Indulgence. And ſo this Toleration being the firſt, ſhall indeed but lay the Foundation and open the gap, whereat as many diviſions in the Church, as there may be ſcruples in the minds of men, ſhall upon the ſelf ſame equity be let in.*

p. 68. And again, *that this will make way for infinite Diviſions and ſub-diviſions; and give Countenance to a perpetual*

p. 73. *Schiſm, and Diviſion in the Church.*

p. 68. 3. *That ſcruple of conſcience* is no *protection againſt Schiſm; no cauſe of Separating; nor doth it take off cauſe-*

p. 73. *leſs Separation from being Schiſm, which may ariſe from Errors of Conſcience as well as carnal and corrupt Reaſons; and therefore they conceive the cauſes of Separation muſt be ſhewn to be ſuch as* ex natura rei *will bear it out.*

p. 111. 4. *That the Apoſtle notwithſtanding the difference of mens Judgements did preſcribe Rules of Uniformity. For*, ſay they, *they ſuppreſſed the contentions of men by the Cuſtome of the Churches of God*, 1 Cor. 11. 16. *and ordain the ſame practice in all the Churches, notwithſtanding our Brethrens diſtinction of difference of light.* 1 Cor. 7. 17. *And did not the Apoſtles bind the burden of ſome neceſſary things on the Churches, albeit there were in thoſe Churches gradual differences of light?*

5. That

5. *That the Apoſtle by this Rule in the Text, did not intend to allow Brethren who agree in all ſubſtantials of Faith and Worſhip, to ſeparate from one another, in thoſe very ſubſtantials wherein they agree. Is this,* ſay they, *to walk by the ſame Rule, and to mind the ſame things, to ſeparate from Churches in thoſe very things wherein we agree with them? We deſire no more of them than we are confident was practiſed by the Saints at* Philippi, *namely to hold practical Communion in things wherein they doctrinally agree.* p. 113, 114. p. 115.

6. *That there is a great deal of difference between Tyranny over mens Conſciences and Rules of Uniformity.* For the *diſſenting Brethren* charged the Aſſembly, *with ſetting up an Uniformity for Uniformities ſake,* i.e. *affecting Uniformity ſo much, as not to regard mens Conſciences; and without reſpect had to the varieties of Light in matters of a leſſer nature; which,* ſay they, *will prove a perfect tyranny, and it is in effect to ſtretch a low man to the ſame length with a taller, or to cut a tall man to the ſtature of one that is low, for Uniformities ſake.* To which the others anſwer, *That they do not deſire Uniformity for the ſake of Tyranny, but only for order, and order for Edification. But for ought they could perceive, any thing that is One muſt be judged the foundation of Tyranny* (which are their own words.) *As to variety of light, they deſired their Brethren to anſwer them in this one thing, whether ſome muſt be denied liberty of their Conſcience in matter of practice, or none? If none, then,* ſay they, *we muſt renounce our Covenant and let in Prelacy again; and* *Ibid.* p. 116.

all other ways; if a denial of liberty unto ſome may be juſt, then Uniformity may be ſettled notwithſtanding va-
p. 117. *riety of lights, without any Tyranny at all. As to their ſimilitude, they grant it to be pretty and plauſible; but ſuch arguments are popular and inartificial, having more of flouriſh than ſubſtance in them. For did not they endeavour to raiſe lower Churches to a greater height? would they permit other Church-Governments if it were in their power, becauſe men muſt not for Uniformities ſake be pared or ſtretched to the meaſure of other men? would they endure the lower ſuckers at the root of their tree to grow till they had killed the tree it ſelf?* Ad populum phaleras.

From whence we ſee the *Church* of *England*'s *endeavour* after *Uniformity* is acquitted from *Tyranny* over the Conſciences of men by the Judgement of the moſt learned of the *Aſſembly* of *Divines*; for ſuch we do not queſtion they choſe to manage this debate, upon which the turn of their whole affairs depended.

3. *A wilful Error or miſtake of Conſcience doth by no means excuſe from ſin.* Thus if a man think himſelf bound to *divide* the *Church* by a *ſinful Separation*; that *Separation* is nevertheleſs a *ſin* for his thinking himſelf bound to do it. For *S.* Paul *thought himſelf bound to do many things againſt the name of* Jeſus of *Nazareth*,
Act. 26. 9.
1 Tim. 1. 13, 15. yet he calls himſelf *a blaſphemer and the greateſt of ſinners*, for what he did under that obligation of *Con-*
S. Joh. 16. 2. *ſcience*. The *Jews* thought themſelves bound in *Conſcience* to *do God ſervice*, but it was a horrible miſtake,

ſtake, when they took *killing the Apoſtles to be any part of it.* From whence it appears, that men may do very bad things, and yet think themſelves *bound in Conſcience* to do them. I do not hence infer that the pretence of *Conſcience* is not to be regarded, becauſe it may be abuſed to ſo ill purpoſes; for no man that hath any *Conſcience* will ſpeak againſt the *Power* of it, and he that declares againſt it, hath no reaſon to be regarded in what he ſaith. But that which ought to be inferred from hence, is, that men ought not to reſt ſatisfied with the preſent dictates of their *Conſciences*, for notwithſtanding them, they may commit very great ſins. I am afraid, the common miſtating the *Caſe* of an *Erroneous Conſcience* hath done a great deal of Miſchief to conſcientious men, and betray'd them into great ſecurity, while they are aſſured they do act according to their Conſciences. For the *queſtion* is generally put, *How far an Erroneous Conſcience doth oblige?* And when men hear that they muſt *not act againſt their Conſciences though they be miſtaken*, they think themſelves ſafe enough, and enquire no further. But if they would conſider, that no mans *Conſcience* alters the nature of *Good* and *Evil* in things; that what *God* hath made a *Duty* or a *Sin* remains ſo, whatever a mans *Conſcience* doth judge concerning them; that no mans Conſcience can ſtrictly oblige him either to *omit a Duty*, or to *commit a ſin*; the utmoſt *Reſolution* of

the Caſe comes to this, That a man may be ſo perplexed and entangled by an *erroneous Conſcience*, that he may be under a neceſſity of ſinning, if he acts either with or againſt it. Not that God ever puts a man under the neceſſity of ſinning, (for then it would be no ſin to him, if it were unavoidable) but that by their own neglect and careleſneſs, without looking after due information, and running on with violent *Prejudices*, which was the caſe of S. *Paul* and the *Jews* (and I wiſh it were not of many Chriſtians) they may make falſe and raſh *judgements* of things, and ſo *ſin* either in doing or not doing what their *Conſciences* tell them they are bound to do.

The moſt material Queſtion then, in the caſe of an *erroneous Conſcience*, is, What *Error of Conſcience* doth excuſe a man from *Sin* in following the *Dictates* of it? For, if the *Error* be wholly *involuntary*; *i. e.* if it be cauſed by *invincible Ignorance*, or after uſing the *beſt means* for due information of his *Conſcience*, though the *Act* may be a fault in it ſelf, yet it ſhall not be imputed to him as a *Sin*; becauſe it wanted the *conſent* of the *Mind*, by which the *Will* is determined; but if men fall into *Wilfull Errors of Conſcience*; *i. e.* if they form their *Judgements* rather by *Prejudice* and *Paſſion* and *Intereſt* than from the *Laws* of *God* or juſt *Rules* of *Conſcience*; if they do not examine things fairly on both ſides, praying for divine direction; if they have

have not patience to hear any thing againſt their opinion, but run on blindly and furiouſly, they may in ſo doing *Act* according to their *Conſciences*, and yet they may be in as great danger of committing heinous ſins as S. *Paul* and the *Jews* were. Thus if men through the *Power* of an *Erroneous Conſcience* may think themſelves bound to make *Schiſms* and *Diviſions* in the *Church*, to diſobey Laws and to break in pieces the *Communion* of that *Church*, which they are, or ought to be members of, they may ſatisfie themſelves that they purſue their *Conſciences*, and yet for want of due care of informing themſelves and judging aright, thoſe very Actions may be *Wilful* and *Damnable Sins*.

Nothing now remains but to make *Application* of what hath been ſaid to our own Caſe. And that ſhall be to two ſorts of Perſons, 1. to thoſe who *continue* in the *Communion* of our Church, 2. to thoſe who *diſſent* from it.

I. To thoſe who *continue* in the *Communion* of our *Church*. *Let us walk by the ſame Rule, and mind the ſame things*. Let us ſtudy the Unity and Peace, and thereby the Honour and ſafety of it. While we keep to *one Rule*, all People know what it is to be of our Church; if men ſet up their own fancies above the Rule, they charge it with imperfection; if they do not obey the Rule, they make themſelves wiſer than thoſe that made it. It hath not been either the *Doctrine* or *Rules* of our *Church* which

which have ever given advantage to the Enemies of it; but the indiſcretion of ſome in going beyond them; and the inconſtancy of others in not holding to them.

Such is the *Purity* of its *Doctrine*, ſuch the *Loyalty* of its *Principles*, ſuch the *Wiſdom*, and *Order*, and *Piety* of its *Devotions*, that none who are true Friends to any of theſe, can be enemies to it. Let us take heed we do not give too much occaſion to our enemies to think the worſe of our *Church* for our ſakes. It is eaſie to obſerve, that moſt quarrels relating to *Conſtitutions* and *Frames* of *Government* are more againſt *Perſons* than *things*; when they are unſatisfied with their management, then they blame the *Government*; but if themſelves were in place, or thoſe they love and eſteem, then the Government is a good thing, if it be in good mens hands. Thus do mens judgements vary as their intereſts do.

And ſo as to *Churches*, we find *Uniformity* and *Order* condemned as *Tyrannical*, till men come into *Power* themſelves, and then the very ſame things and arguments are uſed and thought very good and ſubſtantial, which before were weak and ſophiſtical. Thoſe who ſpeak now moſt againſt the *Magiſtrates Power* in matters of *Religion* had *ten ſubſtantial Reaſons* for it, when they thought the *Magiſtrate* on their own ſide. Thoſe who now plead for *Toleration*, did once think it the *Mo-*

Anſw. to 2 Queſtions. 1659.

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ther of *Confuſion*, the *Nurſe* of *Atheiſm*, the *inlet* of *Popery*, the *common Sink* of all *Errors* and *Hereſies*. But, if there be not much to be ſaid againſt the *Churches Conſtitution*, then they are ready to lay load upon the *Perſons* of the *Governours* and *Members* of it; and thence pretend to a neceſſity of *Separation* for a *purer Communion*. Let us endeavour to remove this objection, not by recrimination (which is too eaſie in ſuch caſes) but by living ſuitably to our holy Religion, by reforming our own lives, and redreſſing (what in us lies) the *Scandals* and *Diſorders* of others. Let us by the innocency and unblameableneſs of our lives, the life and conſtancy of our devotions, the meekneſs and gentleneſs of our behaviour in our own Cauſe, our Zeal and Courage in Gods, add a luſtre to our Religion and bring others to a *Love* of our *Church*.

II. To thoſe who *diſſent* from our *Communion*. *Whether they hear, or whether they will forbear*, I cannot diſmiſs this ſubject, without offering ſome things to them,

1. By way of *Conſideration*.
2. By way of *Advice*.

(1.) I ſhall offer theſe things to their *Conſideration*.

1. Let them conſider *How many things muſt be*

They that are ruled must conſider, that the beſt Policy or Conſtitution, ſo far as it is of mans regulating, hath defects and inconveniences, and affairs will be complicated; and therefore they muſt not be too unyielding, but bear with what is tolerable, and not eaſily remediable. Corbett *of the ſound State of Religion*, p. 75. 1679.

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born with in the conſtitution of a Church; which cannot be expected in this world to be *without Spot or Wrinkle*. And if men will ſet themſelves only to find faults, it is impoſſible, in this ſtate of things, they ſhould ever be pleaſed. And *if they ſeparate where they ſee any thing amiſs*, they muſt follow his example who purſued this *Principle* ſo far, till he withdrew from all *Society*, leſt he ſhould communicate with them in their Sin; in which condition he continued till his Children lay dead in the houſe, and he became utterly unable to help himſelf; and becauſe *no humane inventions were to be allowed about the worſhip of God*, he had cut out of his Bible the *Contents of the Chapters*, and *Titles* of the Leaves, and ſo left the *bare Text*, without Binding or Covers. This is the Caſe the rigid and impracticable principles of ſome would bring our *Churches* to, by cutting off all *Rules* of *Order* and *Decency*, as encroachments on the *Inſtitutions* of Chriſt.

Ball againſt *Can.* p. 13.

2. I deſire them to conſider *how impoſſible it is to give ſatisfaction to all*, and *how many things muſt be allowed a favourable interpretation in publick Conſtitutions and General Laws*; which it is hardly poſſible ſo to frame, but there will be room left for Cavils and Exceptions. Yea *when the wiſeſt and beſt men have done their utmoſt*, ſome of themſelves confeſs, *there may be diſſatisfaction ſtill; and if Chriſtian Humility, Charity and Diſcretion, will then adviſe perſons to acquieſce*

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in their private ſecurity and freedom, and not to unſettle the publick Order for their private ſatisfaction. Why ſhould not men practiſe the ſame vertues themſelves; which they do confeſs, will be neceſſary for *ſome* at laſt?

A diſcourſe of the Religion of *England* in its due Latitude. *Sect.* 19.

Wiſe and Good men will conſider the difficulties that always attend publick Eſtabliſhments; and have that eſteem for *Peace* and *Order*, that they will bear with any thing tolerable for the ſake of it. It is a very hard caſe with a Church when men ſhall ſet their *Wits* to ſtrain every thing to the worſt ſenſe, to ſtretch Laws beyond the intention and deſign of them, to gather together all the doubtful and obſcure paſſages in *Calendars*, *Tranſlations*, *&c.* and will not diſtinguiſh between their approbation of the Uſe and of the Choice of things, for upon ſuch terms as theſe men think to juſtifie the preſent *Diviſions*. I much queſtion, whether if they proceed in ſuch a manner, they can hold *Communion* with any *Church* in the *Chriſtian World*. If men be diſpoſed to find faults, no *Church* can be *pure* enough; for ſomething will be amiſs either in *Doctrine*, or *Diſcipline*, or *Ceremonies*, or *Manners*; but if they be diſpoſed to Peace and Union, then *Charity will cover a multitude of failings*; and then according

Such is the complicated condition of humane affairs, that it is exceeding difficult to deviſe a Rule or Model that ſhall provide for all whom Equity will plead for. Therefore the prudent and ſober will acquieſce in any conſtitution that is in ſome good ſort proportionable to the ends of Government. *A Diſcourſe of the Religion of* England, *&c. Sect.* 14. Printed 1667.

See *Baxters* Cure of Diviſions. *p* 264.

Eph. 4. 2, 3. cording to S. *Paul's* advice, *with all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in Love, they will be endeavouring to preſerve the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.* And without the practice of the former Vertues, no Metaphyſical Diſcourſes of *Unity*, will ſignifie any thing to the *Churches Peace.*

3. They would do well to conſider, *How Separation of the People from our Churches comes to be more lawful now, than in the days of our Fathers.* It hath been often and evidently proved, that the moſt ſober and learned *Non-conformiſts* of former times, *notwithſtanding their ſcruples in ſome points, yet utterly condemned Separation from our Churches as unlawful.* And they looked upon this, not as a meer common ſin of humane infirmity, but as a wilful and dangerous ſin: *in that it is ſo far from tending to the overthrow of Antichriſt, that it upholds and maintains him;* calling it *a renting the Church, the diſgrace of Religion, the advancement of Pride, Schiſm and Contention, the Offence of the Weak, the grief of the Godly, who be better ſettled, the hardning of the Wicked, and the recovery or riſing again of Antichriſtianiſm; nay, even perſecuting the Lord Jeſus in his Haſt, which they revile; in his ordinances, which they diſhonour; and in his Servants whoſe footſteps they ſlander, whoſe Graces they deſpiſe, whoſe Office they trample upon with diſdain.* Theſe are the very words of one of the moſt learned and judicious *Non-conformiſts* before the Wars. And ſurely the

Papers of Accommodation. p. 52.

Ball against Can. Praef. p. 2.

the miſchiefs that followed after, could not make *Separation* to appear leſs odious. Was it a ſin? was it ſuch a ſin then? And is it none now? Either our *Brethren* at this day, do believe it to be a *Sin* for the *People* to *ſeparate*, or they do not: If not, it muſt either be, that there are new and harder terms of Communion, which were not then; which is ſo far from being true, that they confeſs them to be rather eaſier for the People: or it muſt be, that they are gone off from the peaceable principles of their Predeceſſors, which they are unwilling to own. If they do believe it to be a *Sin*, why do they ſuffer the People to live in a known Sin? Why do they encourage them *by Preaching in Separate Congregations*? For their *Predeceſſors* did not think it *lawful*, much leſs a *Duty*, to preach when forbiddən by a Law: *neither did they underſtand what warrant any ordinary Miniſter hath in ſuch a caſe by Gods word, ſo to draw any Church or People to his private Miniſtery in oppoſition to the Laws and Government he lived under.* They underſtood the difference *between the Apoſtles caſes and theirs; and never thought the Apoſtles Woe be unto me if I preach not the Goſpel, did extend to them; but thought that ſilenced Miniſters ought to live as private Members of the Church till they were reſtored, and the People bound to hear others.* Of which there can be far leſs ground to diſpute, when themſelves ac-

Bradſhaw againſt Johnſon. S. 40. 91.

Gouges *whole Armour* of God. *p.* 570.

knowledge the *Doctrine* by Law eſtabliſhed to be *true* and *ſound*.

4. Laſtly, Let me beſeech them to conſider *the common danger that threatens us all by means of our Diviſions*. We have Adverſaries ſubtile and induſtrious enough to make uſe of all advantages to ſerve their own ends; and there is ſcarce any other they promiſe themſelves more from, than the continuance of theſe breaches among our ſelves: This ſome of our *Brethren* themſelves have been aware of; and on that account have told the *People* of the danger of the *Principles of Separation*, as to the intereſt of *Religion* in general, and the *Proteſtant Religion* in particular among us.

Nothing that I know of in the world, doth ſo ſtrongly tempt ſome ſober conſcientious men to think Popery neceſſary for the Concord of Churches, and a violent Church Government neceſſary to our Peace, as the woful experience of the Errors and Schiſms, the mad and manifold Sects that ariſe among thoſe that are moſt againſt them. Baxters *laſt Anſw. to* Bagſhaw. *p.* 30.

You little know what a pernicious deſign the Devil hath upon you, in perſwading you to deſire and endeavour to pull down the intereſt of Chriſt and Religion, which is upheld in the Pariſh-Churches of this Land: and to think that it is beſt to bring them as low in reality, or reputation as you can, and to contract the Religious intereſt all into private meetings. *Id. p.* 31. *n.* 25.

Certainly, Nothing would tend more to our common ſecurity than for all true and ſincere Proteſtants to lay aſide their prejudices, and miſtakes, and to joyn heartily in *Communion* with us: which many of their *Teachers* at this day allow to be lawful. And how can they ſatisfie themſelves

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in hazarding our Religion by not doing that, which themſelves confeſs lawful to be done?

(2.) But if we are not yet ripe for ſo great a mercy as a perfect Union, yet I would intreat our *Brethren* to make way for it by hearkning to theſe following *Advices*.

1. *Not to give encouragement to raſh and intemperate zeal*; which rends all in pieces, and makes reconciliation impoſſible. Thoſe who ſee leaſt into things, are uſually the fierceſt contenders about them: and ſuch eager Diſputants are fitter to make quarrels than to end them; for they can be *contentious* for *Peace-ſake*, and make new *differences* about the *ways* of *Unity*. Wiſdom and Sobriety, a good judgement, a prudent temper, and freedom from prejudice will tend more to end our differences, than warm Debates, and long Diſputations; which as *Greg. Nazianzen* ſaid once of Councils, *ſeldom have had any good end*. But there is a more fiery ſort of zeal, and more dangerous than this; which may lie ſmothering for a time, till it meets with ſuitable matter and a freer vent, and then it breaks out into a dreadful flame. This we have already ſeen ſuch diſmal effects of in this age, that we ſhould think there were leſs need to give men caution againſt it again, were it not to be feared, that where Reaſon cannot prevail, Experience will not. All that we can ſay to ſuch perſons that may be like to move them, is, that if

their

their *blind zeal* tranſport them, as it did *Sampſon*, to pull down the *Houſe* over their *Heads*, they will be ſure to periſh themſelves in the fall of it; but here will lie the great difference of the caſe, while they and their Friends periſh together, the *Philiſtins* without will rejoyce to make others the inſtruments to execute their deſigns.

2. *Not to be always complaining of their hardſhips and Perſecutions*; as though no People had ſuffered ſo much ſince the days of *Diocleſian*; whereas the ſeverity of the Laws hath been tempered with ſo much gentleneſs in the execution of them, that others have as much complained of *Indulgence*, as they of *Perſecution*. It doth not look like the *Patience*, and *Humility*, and *Meekneſs* of the *Primitive Chriſtians*, to make ſuch noiſe and outcries of their ſuffering ſo much, when *they* would have been rather thankful that they ſuffered no more. Is this the *way to Peace*, to repreſent their caſe ſtill to the world in an exaſperating and provoking manner? Is this the way to incline their *Governours* to more *condeſcenſion*, to repreſent them to the *People* as an *Ithacian perſecuting Party*? Where are the *Priſcillians* that have been put to death by their inſtigation? What do ſuch inſinuations mean, but that our *Biſhops* are the followers of *Ithacius and Idacius* in their *cruelty*; and they of the good and meek Biſhop S. *Martin*, who refuſed Communion with them on that account? If men

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do entertain ſuch kind thoughts of themſelves, and ſuch hard thoughts of their *Superiors*, whatever they *plead for*, they have no inclination to *Peace*.

3. *Not to condemn others for that which themſelves have practiſed, and think to be lawful in their own caſes.* What outcries have ſome made againſt the *Church* of *England*, as *Cruel* and *Tyrannical*, for expecting and requiring *Uniformity*? And yet do not ſuch men, even at this day, contend for the *Obligation* of a *Covenant*, which binds men to *endeavour after Uniformity in Doctrine, Diſcipline and Worſhip*? But they want the ingenuity of *Adoni-bezek*, to reflect on the *Thumbs and the Toes, which they have cut off from others*; and think themſelves bound to do it again, if it were in their power. Who could have been thought more moderate in this way, than thoſe who went upon the principles of the *diſſenting Brethren*? And yet we are aſſured, that even in *New England*, when their own Church-way was by Law eſtabliſhed among them, they made it no leſs than *Baniſhment* for the *Anabaptiſts to ſet up other Churches among them, or for any ſecretly to ſeduce others from the Approbation and uſe of Infant-baptiſm.* And how they have ſince proceeded with the *Quakers*, is very well known. Nay, even theſe, notwithſtanding the ſingle *Independency* of every mans *light within him*, have found it neceſſary to make *Rules* and *Orders* among themſelves;

Judg. 1. 7.

See *Clarks* Narrative of *New-Englands* Perſecution, *A. D.* 1651.

ſelves to govern their *Societies*, to which they expect an *uniform Obedience*; and allow *no Liberty out of the Power and Truth*; as they love to ſpeak. From all which it appears, the true Controverſie is not about the *Reaſonableneſs* of *Uniformity*; but who ſhall have the *Power* of preſcribing the *Rules* of it. Is it not now a very hard caſe, that the *Church of England* muſt be loaded with bitter reproaches, and expoſed to the common hatred of all *Parties* for the ſake of that, which every one of them would practiſe if it were in their *Power*; and think it very juſtifiable ſo to do?

See Spirit of the Hat. *p.* 12, *&c.*

4. *Not to inflame the Peoples heats, by making their differences with the* Church *of* England *to appear to be greater than they are.* Let them deal honeſtly and faithfully with them, by letting them underſtand that they look on *our Churches as true Churches, and occaſional Communion* at leaſt with them to be *lawful*: (and it is hard to underſtand, if *occaſional Communion* be *lawful*, that *conſtant Communion* ſhould not be a *Duty*.) This were the way to abate mens great prejudices, and to ſoften their Spirits, and to prepare them for a cloſer Union. But if inſtead of this, they endeavour to darken and confound things, and caſt miſts before their eyes, that they cannot ſee their way clear before them; all underſtanding men will conclude, they prefer ſome little intereſts of their own, before the honour of *Chriſt* and the *Peace* of his *Church*.

5. *Not*

5. *Not to harbour or foment unreaſonable jealouſies and ſuſpicions in Peoples minds concerning us.* This hath been one of the moſt ſucceſsful arts of keeping up the diſtance and prejudices that have been ſo great among us, *viz.* by private whiſpers, by falſe ſuggeſtions, by idle ſtories, by unreaſonable interpretation of words beyond the intention and deſign of thoſe who ſpake them. By ſuch devices as theſe, great miſchief hath been done among us, and I am much afraid, is doing ſtill. For nothing ſets men at a greater diſtance from our *Church*, than the apprehending that we are not *hearty* and *ſincere* in the *Proteſtant Cauſe*: which although it be a moſt groundleſs and malicious calumny, yet there have been ſome, who have had ſo little regard to *Conſcience*, or *common ingenuity*, as not only to charge particular *Perſons*, but our *Church* it ſelf with *Marching towards Popery*. What injuſtice, what uncharitableneſs, what impudence is it, to faſten ſuch an imputation upon a *Church* that hath hitherto continued (and long may it do ſo) the chief *Bulwark* of the *Proteſtant Cauſe*? Little do ſuch perſons conſider, how much they ſerve the deſign of our enemies, who cannot but be mightily pleaſed to find their moſt *formidable adverſaries* repreſented to the People as their *Secret Friends*.

6. *Not to run the hazard of all for a ſhew of greater Liberty to themſelves.* For under this pretence our *Adverſaries* endeavour to make them their *Inſtru-*

ments to bring upon our Necks *a Yoke which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear.* An *univerſal Toleration* is that *Trojan Horſe*, which brings in our *enemies* without being ſeen, and which after a long Siege they hope to bring in at laſt under the pretence of ſetting our Gates wide enough open, to let in all our friends.

And then think with your ſelves what advantages they will have above others; conſidering ſome mens coldneſs and indifferency in Religion; others uncertainty and running from one extreme to another; others eaſineſs in being drawn away by the hopes and fears of this world; which have a wonderful influence upon changing mens opinions, even when they do not think it themſelves. So that thoſe ſeem very little to underſtand mankind, who do not apprehend the dangerous conſequences of a *general Toleration.*

Thoſe who pretend there is no danger, *becauſe by this means the Folly of their Religion will be expoſed*, do not conſider what a catching diſeaſe folly is; and how natural it is for men that are fanciful in Religion to exchange one folly for another. If all men were wiſe and ſober in Religion, there would need no *Toleration*; if they are not, we muſt ſuppoſe, if they had what they wiſhed, they would do as might be expected from men wanting Wiſdom and Sobriety, *i. e.* All the ſeveral Parties would be ſtriving and contending with each

each other, which ſhould be uppermoſt, and gain the greateſt intereſt.

And what would the fruit of all ſuch contentions be, but endleſs diſputes, and expoſing the follies of one another, till at laſt *Religion* it ſelf be ſunk into the greateſt contempt; or men, through meer wearineſs of contending, be willing even to ſubmit to *Papal Tyranny*, becauſe it pretends to ſome kind of *Unity*?

And verily you will keep up the Papiſts hope, that by an Univerſal Toleration, they may at laſt come in on equal Terms with you, or by connivence, be endured as much as you. And if they be equal in *England* with you, their tranſmarine advantages will make them more than equal, notwithſtanding their diſadvantages in their cauſe, and their contrariety to Kingly intereſt. Baxters *laſt Anſw. to* Bagſhaw. *p.* 31.

So that, upon the whole matter, if we would conſult the *Honour* of *God* and *Religion*, the *Peace* and *Tranquillity* of the *Church* we live in; if we would prevent the great *Deſigns* of our enemies, and leave the *Proteſtant Religion* here eſtabliſhed to *Poſterity*, we ought to follow the *Apoſtles Advice*, *in walking by the ſame Rule, and in minding the ſame things.*

THE END.

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